

The gestapo of the United States? I am really not sure where to begin in responding to this foaming hysteria.

It is one thing for a few protesters and Socialist hecklers who want open borders and the elimination of all immigration laws to adopt a slogan as silly and ill-considered as “abolish ICE,” but it is something else entirely when U.S. Senators are so eager to please these leftwing extremists that they join that chorus—join in denigrating the men and women of U.S. law enforcement. This is the moment we are in—that of leading Democrats’ taking cues from the open-borders Socialist crowd and proposing to eliminate the very agency that enforces Federal immigration laws within the interior of our country. Talk about a political stunt.

The American people want nothing to do with these dangerous antics. My neighbors and constituents in Kentucky certainly don’t. So my fellow Republicans and I will continue to proudly stand with ICE, stand with the rule of law, and stand with all of the American families who would rather have fewer drugs and less crime in the communities in which they are raising their children.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on another matter, we learned last week that second-quarter real GDP growth exceeded 4 percent. That is the best quarterly growth rate in 4 years and one of the strongest reports since the great recession.

Earlier this month, we learned that new claims for unemployment insurance recently reached the lowest level since—listen to this—1969 and that the number of continuing claims, week to week, is lower than it has been at any point since 1973. Let me say that another way. Notwithstanding almost half a century of population growth, fewer Americans are applying for new unemployment benefits today than has ever been the case since just a few months after Apollo 11 landed on the Moon. The last time this few number of Americans continued to receive unemployment week to week was when Richard Nixon was President. No wonder analysts are heaping praise on this economy. The Wall Street Journal noted last week that recent reports indicate “underlying strength that could tee up one of the best years in the current expansion.”

Back in March, my home State of Kentucky joined a list of 14 States that have reached the lowest unemployment rates in recorded history since this united Republican government has been in office. Never before on record has Kentucky’s unemployment rate dropped as low as 4 percent.

Already in 2018, an estimated 14,000 Kentuckians have found jobs at businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Glier’s Meats, in Covington, announced that the company was plan-

ning to add new positions and invest in new equipment to meet growing demand. In the words of the company’s president, “We had a number of projects that were seen as something we could consider doing down the road, but because of tax reform, it’s possible to reinvest in the plant and in new equipment now.”

In Ashland, Braidy Industries expects to support 1,000 construction jobs as it constructs a new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility and then 600 permanent jobs. It broke ground in June.

Not a single one of our colleagues across the aisle voted in support of this historic tax reform that is helping to make these developments possible. For them, these data are telling an inconvenient truth, and the inconvenient truth is this: The rest of America is not hiding from these numbers. Americans are benefiting from these numbers. We are celebrating them and all of the life-changing job opportunities, wage growth, and small business expansions they represent.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate has a duty and a responsibility to methodically review a Supreme Court nominee’s record. That is why, in past years, the Senate has sent bipartisan letters—bipartisan—to the National Archives and Presidential libraries requesting the necessary information on a nominee. Democrats and Republicans agreed that however we would ultimately vote, transparency and openness were principles we all shared.

It appears that bipartisan tradition has been tossed aside. It was fine for our Republican friends when they were in the minority and President Obama nominated candidates to the Supreme Court. But the double standard is glaring, enormous, and detrimental to America.

Now the Republican majority has cast aside Democratic wishes for openness and transparency and has made a partisan request for only a small subset of Judge Kavanaugh’s records. It is such a break from precedent that we have to wonder: What are the Republicans hiding about Judge Kavanaugh’s

record? What are they so afraid of that they tie themselves in knots—into a pretzel—to contradict everything they stood for when they were in the minority?

Today, every Democrat on the Judiciary Committee has joined Ranking Member FEINSTEIN in making a formal request of the National Archives to provide the exact same universe of documents provided during the confirmation of Justice Kagan. When I say the same request, I mean the exact same request.

The Judiciary Committee has updated the letter to refer to Judge Kavanaugh, but in every other way it is identical to the request that Democrats and Republicans made for Justice Kagan that Republicans insisted on when she was nominated by President Obama.

By the way, it was Senate Republicans who insisted on this standard during previous confirmations. Democrats, even though our nominee might be exposed, agreed because we believed in openness, and we are not hypocritical in saying that it is only good when we are in charge, not when you are in charge. We believe it works both ways.

Ranking Member FEINSTEIN has made it clear that we don’t need or want every single scrap of paper from Judge Kavanaugh’s time as Staff Secretary, but to review none—none—of the nominee’s records for most of his senior role in the White House is an act of what might be called willful opacity. That is why we are not following very sensible, bipartisan precedent now.

Judge Kavanaugh himself has said that his time as Staff Secretary was especially useful to him as a judge and that his time in the White House made him a better interpreter of statutes. I hope that the National Archives will understand the dilemma we are in and the unusual circumstance we are in, and, ultimately, I hope my Republican colleagues will understand and that both the Archives, either on its own or with Republican acquiescence, will make the right decision in the interests of transparency, consistency, and fairness. To do otherwise is to forsake the Senate’s constitutional duty to provide advice and consent on this surpassingly important nomination.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another subject, taxes, President Trump and congressional Republicans promised working America the Moon and the stars with their tax bill. President Trump said that it would create “a middle-class miracle” and that everyone would get a \$4,000 raise. Remember that? President Trump promised the American people that these tax cuts for the wealthy would trickle down—or torrent down—and everyone would get a \$4,000 raise. If we asked Americans from one end of the country to the other to tell us by raising their

hands how many of them got a \$4,000 raise, maybe the top 1 percent would—maybe the top 2 percent—but not most Americans.

Wages are virtually stagnant. The promises the President made have not materialized. And when we measure wages against costs of everyday living—in other words, buying power, how much of a raise you get versus how much things cost—the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that year over year, hourly earnings have dropped by 1 percent. In other words, the American consumer—the average middle-class person, even with this tax cut—has less buying power today than they had last year. President Trump and Republicans promised a \$4,000 raise, but average hourly earnings' buying power—the ability to live a decent life—for far too many Americans has gone down. Talk about a sleight of hand. Talk about an exaggerated—if not dishonest—promise. There it is.

While average working Americans continue to struggle to keep their heads above water, corporations and the wealthy are having a bonanza thanks to the Republican tax bill. As the President himself tweeted this morning, the tax bill made the Koch brothers and almost every multimillionaire richer at a time when they are doing great. We don't begrudge that people are wealthy and doing well, but the middle class needed this tax break far more than the rich, even though the rich had political power over our Republican friends—and when the wealthiest lobbyists and big, powerful corporations say jump, our Republican friends say how high, ignoring the middle class. So in the Trump economy, big, wealthy corporations are cashing in, the top 1 percent are doing great, and American workers are falling behind.

Listen to this. Already this year, corporations have dedicated over \$600 billion—now approaching \$700 billion—to corporate share buybacks and debt repurchasing programs, goosing their stock price but doing little to help workers. That is a record pace. These buybacks help the CEOs and wealthy shareholders but do nothing for the middle class.

There is also a new, troubling pattern being brought to light of corporate executives selling off stocks shortly after the stock price has been inflated. So they do the buyback, then they sell the stock and cash in. Here is the pattern: The Republican tax bill gave American corporations a mammoth tax cut; American corporations use some of those newfound profits to buy back and inflate the value of their own stock; executives of those companies then turn around and sell the stock at a higher price to pad their pockets.

SEC Commissioner Robert Jackson studied nearly 400 examples of stock buybacks since the beginning of 2017 and found that after half of them—half—at least one executive sold shares

within the next month. That is American taxpayer money. President Trump. That is the money you are taking from the American people and giving to the wealthiest of the American people. The Republican tax bill is robbing the American Treasury to pad the pockets of wealthy executives and the richest Americans.

Now, if that wasn't bad enough, listen to what they want to do now. It was reported in yesterday's newspaper, the administration is considering doing an end-run around Congress to give another \$100 billion tax cut mainly to the wealthy by cutting taxes on capital gains. The economy is already running hot on the artificial sweetener of tax cuts and deficit spending. Another \$100 billion in tax cuts for the rich isn't just more gasoline on the fire; it is an incendiary device.

At a time when the deficit is out of control, at a time when wages are flat, at a time when the wealthiest are doing better than ever, to give the top 1 percent another big advantage is outrageous. It shows the Republicans' true colors: tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, empty promises for everyone else.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on North Korea, last night, we received news that North Korea has been continuing work at a missile facility north of its capital. Previous satellite images have shown work ongoing at two other missile sites in the country.

Clearly, North Korea is not suspending, let alone winding down, its nuclear missile programs. Yet, shortly after President Trump met with Chairman Kim in Singapore, President Trump said North Korea was "no longer a nuclear threat" to the United States. The juxtaposition of President Trump's rhetoric and the facts on the ground are jarring. It would be funny if it wasn't so sad.

President Trump explains out of nowhere that the nuclear threat is over, and North Korea is building more missiles that reportedly can reach all of the United States instead of just the West Coast. North Korea's nuclear program remains a grave threat to the region and the United States. President Trump can't wish it away. He can't place fantasy next to reality. North Korea will not give up its nuclear program simply because President Trump wants them to. Now, we are all rooting for diplomacy to succeed, but if President Trump is going to make progress toward the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea, he needs to grapple with the reality of the situation, not be in a dream world where he thinks his rhetoric is reality, when it doesn't match the dangerous reality on the ground.

3D GUNS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on 3D guns, in a short time, just

a minute or two from now, I will be joining several of my colleagues to talk about an issue we have been worried about for quite a while—ghost guns. Over the past several years, 3D printing technology has advanced to the point where anyone with an internet connection is now able to print guns at home.

A court order has barred companies from posting plans to print guns, but a few weeks ago, inexplicably, the Trump administration settled with gun activists to allow them to post detailed instructions, plans, files, and 3D drawings of weapons on the internet, and this starts tomorrow. So, starting tomorrow, all you need is a little money—a couple hundred bucks—and you can download a print from the internet to make a gun at home. No background check, no criminal history check, no certification that the person isn't adjudicated mentally ill or has the intent to harm. Even terrorists could avail themselves of this technology to print an unlimited amount of home weapons. According to the New York Post, more than 1,000 people have downloaded plans to make AR-style, 3D-printed guns, and the ban hasn't even been lifted yet.

The idea of these print-on-command ghost guns is as scary as they sound. We should be doing everything in our power to make sure this doesn't happen. These guns can go through metal detectors, stadiums, and airports: No metal; they are made of plastic only.

Out of the blue this morning, President Trump tweeted he was looking into the matter, months after his own administration caused the problem by settling with gun activists and allowing it to happen. From 2010 to 2017, you couldn't do this. There was an international agreement. The Trump administration, because gun activists were pushing, said go ahead and do it.

Now, a day before this happens, President Trump is saying he will look into the matter—although he said he would consult the NRA. Hardly the great advocates of gun safety in America. I wish President Trump had looked into this matter months ago—or even last week—and urged the Justice Department and the State Department not to reach the settlement in the first place. It is another example—of so many—of the President showing up on the scene a day late and a dollar short to address a problem his own administration has created. The President's tweet this morning gets to the basic incompetence of this administration: The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, and it has real important consequences for the safety of the American people.

I look forward to joining my colleagues to talk more about this issue and what Congress can do about it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.